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**Petal Clock Process:**

**Struggles and Discoveries in New Media Experimentation**

Unlike my typical idea generation process, it did not take me very long to decide on the format and subject matter of my Born-Digital Experiment. Despite a great number of our discussed example pieces being prose in nature, I nonetheless preferred the lyrical pieces and wanted to produce something more abstract and lyrical: an interactive electronic piece of a decidedly poetic nature. With this general outline in mind, I approached the Twine program for the very first time, discovering (to my disappointment) that millennial status did not exempt me from the trials and frustrations of digital media composition.

Of course, neither did it exempt me from the standard trials and frustrations of literary work. I knew I wanted to produce poetry, but to what point and purpose? In recent weeks I have begun to notice how different portions of my day are distinctly colored by my current mood. That is, I have my most productive, explosive bursts of creativity and energy in the morning. My afternoon second-wind isn’t quite so powerful, but it does produce in me a steady and consistent rhythm of action. Late at night, I have virtually no energy at all, and it is at this time that I have my most bizarre (though sometimes insightful) thoughts. I operate, I noticed, according to a biological clock. But then, so do so many other living things! Certain plant life, for example, tends to wax and wane through the course of the day. Analogizing my three main modes to three similarly programmed flowers (Morning Glory, Four O’Clocks, and Moonflower), I decided that my project would be a collection of poems: one poem for each stage of this daily cycle.

Before getting involved with the digital medium, I first wrote the poems themselves (I did this on a computer, but it was in a simple word-processing document). Afterwards, I began to construct the Twine project. I knew that it wouldn’t require very many screens; after all, I was seeking only to provide a visually stimulating index to link my poems to a main menu. For this reason, the coding and hyperlinking would be relatively minimal.

The graphic design portion, however, would take a great deal longer. I wanted more than to simply write about my three daily phases as if they were flowers; I wanted to *show* the reader a reflection of what such a flowering mood might look like. Furthermore, simply listing the poems in a bullet-point index seemed far too simple. Clearly, I needed to better consider how to utilize the visual idiosyncrasies of the digital medium.

At this point, I elected to design the image of a flower bed full of vines (Morning Glory, Four O’Clocks, and Moonflower are all vines). As the reader progressed through the poems, they would find the flower bed blooming with whatever flower corresponded to the poem they were currently viewing. And instead of a list index, I designed a cartoon clock divided up into three portions. The reader could select whichever portion of the clock they so desired, and make their way to the relevant poem through this visual index.

To make these original images, I turned to the software I know best: Powerpoint. Even mentioning this program makes most computer-savvy folks roll their eyes, but I have found that Powerpoint is a very useful tool in the design of cartoon images, largely because it allows you to create, modify, overlap, and color different shapes. This is how I created the images for my project: I made them one shape at a time (usually drawing custom shapes for, for example, the petals) and then added detail in the form of additional shapes. Once I had an entire image designed to my satisfaction, I grouped the shapes into a single object using the right-click function, and then saved the group object as a .PNG file. I then imported these .PNG picture files into Twine (I prefer .PNG because it maintains the transparent portions of the image file).

I am pleased with the images I designed, but I must admit, creating them from scratch (and in Powerpoint, no less, which was *not* designed to create graphics in this way) was an incredibly tedious and time-consuming process. I am glad that the reader will be able to look at relatively realistic imaginations of the flowers in question when reading about them, but that was a visual production that required more of me than I realized at the onset.

In reflection, I learned a great deal about Twine, and more specifically, how to make Twine jive with other programs (Powerpoint in my case) to produce especially stimulating projects. My clock and flowers look much better than would a simple list index linking the poems, but they were by no means an easy production. I hope that they provide an extra level of digital interaction that enhances the reader experience.